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DE RUEHROV #0238/01 3201523
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161523Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0553
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0581

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000238

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2016
TAGS: [SO](#) [CI](#) [VT](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [CG](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: VATICAN RECOGNIZES NEED FOR CALM IN CONGO

REF: Kinshasa 1746

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CLASSIFIED BY: Peter Martin, Pol/Econ Chief, Vatican, State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

1. Holy See Deputy FM Parolin told the Ambassador November 16 that he was aware of Congolese Cardinal Etsou's inflammatory statements. Parolin agreed that the objective for all concerned was a peaceful acceptance of the election results. He said he had spoken to the Papal Nuncio November 16 and had emphasized the Holy See's desire for calm. We also spoke to the Community of Sant'Egidio's Don Matteo Zuppi, who was also concerned about Etsou's comments. Initial impressions that Etsou seemed amenable to finding a way to back off his statements may have been incorrect. Zuppi said November 16 that Etsou seemed to have hardened somewhat and was unlikely to say anything helpful. We don't think we can expect the Vatican to do much to muzzle Etsou, but the Holy See understands the gravity of the situation and may well work through the Nuncio to appeal for calm. The Sant'Egidio angle may also pay dividends as Zuppi will continue to work his connections. End Summary.

Vatican Aware, Emphasizes Desire for Calm

2. The Ambassador raised the incendiary comments of Cardinal Frederic Etsou-Nzabi-Bamungwabi with Holy See Deputy Foreign Minister Pietro Parolin November 16. Parolin was aware of Etsou's statements and the subsequent statement by Archbishop Monsengwo Pasinya that Parolin said he hoped had "clarified" Etsou's comments. Parolin agreed that the objective for all concerned was a peaceful acceptance of the election results. He was aware that observers had given the elections good marks for fairness.

3. Parolin said he thought Etsou's motives were not bad, but he

admitted that the cardinal "might have chosen a different way to express his thinking." Parolin implied that Etsou might have been used by those with an interest in instability. Parolin said he had spoken to the Papal Nuncio Giovanni d'Aniello November 16 and had emphasized the Holy See's desire for calm following the release of the election results. As a confidential aside, he raised his eyebrows at the participation

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of a priest as head of the election commission and said that a clergyman holding that spot could put the Church in a difficult spot.

Sant'Egidio Engaged

14. We also spoke both November 15 and 16 to Don Matteo Zuppi of the Vatican-affiliated Community of Sant'Egidio, who is well-connected in the Congo. Zuppi was concerned about Etsou's comments, and agreed that they were dangerous. He said he had spoken to Etsou November 15 and 16. Initial impressions that Etsou seemed amenable to find a way to back off his statements may have been incorrect. Zuppi said November 16 that Etsou seemed to have hardened somewhat and was unlikely to say anything helpful. At least, Zuppi said, he didn't think Etsou would speak further on the subject. This may be the best we can hope for, Zuppi commented. Zuppi had also spoken to Papal Nuncio d'Aniello, who seemed to understand what was at stake.

Comment

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15. Parolin didn't want to criticize Etsou, but clearly understood that his comments were potentially destabilizing. The Vatican Foreign Ministry is hesitant (and sometimes unable) to put a muzzle on prelates commenting on the political situation in their dioceses, so we don't think we can expect them to do much with Etsou. However, after our call, and interventions by Javier Solana, the Belgians, French and Dutch, the Holy See understands the gravity of the situation and may well work through the Nuncio to appeal for calm. The Sant'Egidio angle may also pay dividends as Zuppi will continue to work his connections. Post will update as necessary.
ROONEY